

Michelle Steel: Aiding Arizona while denouncing it

By MICHELLE STEEL

California's liberal politicians are clamoring to denounce Arizona's attempt to deal with illegal immigration. The city of Los Angeles has authorized a boycott of Arizona, and calls for boycotts have been heard in San Francisco and in the state Capitol. War has been declared on a neighboring state that is doing what it can to end the cycle of violence caused by drug cartels.

It's ironic that California politicians so upset with Arizona still do their best to improve Arizona's economy. Sure, there are calls to cancel government contracts. There are cries against buying Arizona products, and even against changing flights in Phoenix. Despite all this, many of California's politicians remain committed to exporting jobs and opportunity to Arizona.

Our economy is in the tank. Yes, the country has been in a recession – but California has receded further than the rest of the nation. According to the California Employment Development Department, five of California's 58 counties had unemployment rates above 20 percent in April; 19 counties had unemployment rates above 15 percent. Only seven counties had rates below 10 percent – and just barely.

The highest unemployment rate was in Imperial County, where nearly one in three eligible workers was out of a job. But the politicians refuse to open their eyes. Too many of the "solutions" being offered are more regulations and more taxes. But more of the same policies that got us into this mess won't get us out of it. For the fifth year in a row, a magazine survey of hundreds of U.S. CEOs rated California as the worst state in which to do business.

While our government continues to pursue job-killing taxes and regulations, the list of companies moving to Arizona grows. Cessna Aircraft recently moved its Long Beach service center to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport, taking 65 percent of its maintenance crew with it. Abraxis Health opened a new manufacturing plant in Phoenix, creating 200 jobs there instead of in California; that's on top of two previous expansions in Arizona. Santa Ana's First American Corp. recently

opened a call center in Phoenix – it plans to hire 400 employees in Arizona over two years. These are just a few examples of the economic growth California's policies are creating for neighboring states.

California's leaders need to build an economic plan that makes us a destination for business instead of a pariah. We need to cut the corporate income tax rate in half to jump-start growth and job creation. California's corporate income-tax rate of 8.84 percent is the highest in the West. Our personal income tax is the fourth-highest in the country. No wonder businesses are leaving. We need to lessen the tax burden on working families.

Today, more Californians are moving to Oklahoma than immigrants going the other direction during the Dust Bowl.

NationalBubble.com, an economics and real estate site, has 13 pages of comments from Californians who have decided to leave the state. Here's a comment from someone self-described as a Bay Area native:

"I have a master's degree and make decent money, but I still cannot afford to pay my rent, forget ever owning a home. I'm exhausted. I have no time anymore for doing things I love. I'm facing a bleak future if I don't do something, if I don't get out of here.

"I'm sad about leaving, but know that once I'm somewhere where just surviving isn't such a chore, I'll be a lot happier."

As an immigrant, who came to our great state the legal way, I appreciate the unmatched opportunities our nation provides. As a Californian I would appreciate if our politicians stopped the pandering and the platitudes and, instead, took action on real, lasting, solutions to our economic crisis.